

Public Involvement



Photo: Michael Saletra

Section 7: Public Involvement

7.1 Overview

A major tenet of ecosystem management is continuous involvement of the public that is inclusive and respectful of all viewpoints and stakeholders. All the partners involved in the LaMP process, i.e. states, provinces, federal agencies, the tribes/First Nations, industry, the public and others, have long been committed to an open, fair and significant public involvement process. LaMP 2000 is not an end to this process, but provides an opportunity for full public review and input on what has been developed to date, and ongoing involvement in the revisions and updates to come in future LaMP publications. Public input and support will help ensure the actions recommended in the LaMP are carried out, leading the way to restoring and protecting the Lake Erie ecosystem. The key to public support and the program's success is effective communication between the government agencies and the diverse population of the Lake Erie basin.

LaMP 2000 is presented as a working document, based on existing information. It was the goal of the Binational Executive Committee (BEC) to provide a *current* foundation for discussion not necessarily a *complete one*. The LaMP will be modified every two years based on new findings and public input. This is a necessary step if we are to institute adaptive management on an ecosystem scale.

Formal comments on the LaMP 2000 document will be received for 60 days following its release. The Public Involvement Subcommittee is responsible for gathering comments submitted by the public and ensuring that the proper agency staff receive the comments in order to take them into consideration in the ongoing LaMP process and for the LaMP 2002 document. Responses will then be prepared so that those who made submissions will know what happened as a result of their comments. **The LaMP 2000 document will not be revised.** As the LaMP 2000 report is available on our web sites, it is also possible to use the on-line submission form to submit your comments. The website addresses are www.cciw.ca/glimr/lakes/erie/ and www.epa.gov/glnpo/lakeerie/. We also plan to set up a page on the website that will be used to display the comments. This will allow members of the public to review all comments received by the agencies.

Over the coming months, there will be public meetings in the Lake Erie basin to educate stakeholders about the LaMP, receive their input and to encourage actions to improve the ecosystem of the Lake Erie basin. Many of the meetings will be held in local Areas of Concern so that we can continue to better integrate the LaMP and RAP processes. A short summary of each of the RAPs can be found in Appendix A of this document.

We invite you to stay involved in the LaMP process after April 2000. As actions are implemented and evaluated, new data gathered and analyzed, and new background documents drafted, this information will be placed on our website for public review and input. Although the LaMP document will not be published again until April of 2002, there will be many opportunities for input and involvement during the two-year period.

7.2 Background and History

The original public involvement strategy for the LaMP was completed in April 1995. It described a three-tiered approach to involving the public. Tier I is the Lake Erie LaMP Binational Public Forum, which is composed of members who are familiar with LaMP activities, who have the most active level of public involvement in the LaMP and who have direct contact with the Lake Erie LaMP Work Group. Tier II, the Lake Erie Network, is composed of individuals and groups who have expressed an interest in the LaMP by attending meetings and workshops or by commenting on documents, and who have requested additional information about the LaMP. They form the mailing list for the Lake Erie LaMP. Tier III is the general public with members being unfamiliar with the Lake Erie LaMP.

The Public Involvement Subcommittee provides information to the media about ongoing binational and local LaMP activities as a way of keeping the general public informed. Because the LaMP is an evolving program, new information is distributed as it becomes available. Information is also available on the Internet at www.cciw.ca/glimr/lakes/erie/ or www.epa.gov/glnpo/lakeerie/. In 1995, a questionnaire was distributed assessing the knowledge and involvement level of all individuals on the mailing list. The information requested was used to develop a public involvement and communication program to build teamwork between citizens and government agencies involved in accomplishing the goals of the LaMP.

Ecosystem Objective Workshop

During the months of May and June 1995 the Public Involvement Subcommittee held four ecosystem objective workshops in Sandusky, Ohio; Dunkirk, New York; and in Simcoe and Leamington, Ontario. The government agencies used these workshops to solicit public input toward identifying ecosystem objectives for Lake Erie. These workshops served to bring members of the public together with agency representatives to direct Lake Erie LaMP efforts. These early workshops set the stage for what was to become a working group of concerned, involved residents of the Lake Erie basin who have joined together as the Lake Erie Binational Forum.

Lake Erie LaMP Binational Public Forum

The concept of a Lake Erie LaMP Binational Public Forum was developed as part of the overall public involvement strategy. It was introduced to the public with the publication and distribution of the Lake Erie LaMP Concept Paper in 1995. Involvement of the public is important to assist in creating and implementing a LaMP that truly reflects the concerns and expectations of Lake Erie basin citizens.

The goal of creating the Forum was to have a formal group of citizens that was knowledgeable about the process and issues; was accountable to both the Management Committee and to the public; that would increase public understanding and involvement in the Lake Erie LaMP's development; and that may be interested in undertaking their own activities in support of protecting and restoring Lake Erie. The Forum would be the most involved level of public participation, and would consist of individuals representing a broad range of interests and geographic areas from around the Lake Erie basin.

7.3 Public Involvement Activities

Status Report and Update

In its support role to the Work Group, the Public Involvement Subcommittee assisted in the production and distribution of the *Lake Erie LaMP Status Report* in the Spring of 1999. A companion piece, entitled the *Lake Erie LaMP Update '99*, was written and produced as the main distribution document to inform people about the issues in, and availability of, the *Status Report*. The *Update '99* mailing also served as a vehicle for informing the public about the availability of the various Beneficial Use Impairment Assessment Reports that the committee is responsible for distributing.

Other Activities

In addition to the activities already mentioned, the Public Involvement Subcommittee was involved in a variety of outreach activities. These include the production of the following documents: 1) fact sheet giving an overview of Lake Erie LaMP development, printed in Fall 1995 and revised in November 1996; 2) distribution of educational posters entitled *Lake Erie Fish and Fishery* and *Waterbirds of Lake Erie* that were developed by various United States and Canadian government agencies involved with the LaMP; and 3) creation and distribution of bookmarks with the URL for the binational LaMP website.

7.4 Ongoing and Upcoming Activities

The Public Involvement Subcommittee is at present working on the improvement of the Lake Erie LaMP Binational website. Placed online in 1998, the site currently has basic information about the LaMP and its organizational structure, as well as publications or products of the LaMP. The goal is to make the website a place where the public can go to answer their questions and learn about the Lake Erie LaMP.

The subcommittee will also be preparing future editions of the *Lake Erie LaMP Update*. As *Update '99* was successful in getting the word out about the *Lake Erie LaMP Status Report* and in encouraging people to join the Lake Erie Network, it was decided that there should be future editions to get information out to the public in a succinct fashion.

As the development of ecosystem objectives for the lake has progressed, it is expected that another series of workshops will be held in autumn 2000, to obtain the public's views on the direction that efforts should take in restoring uses of the lake. The Lake Erie LaMP Work Group has prepared four *ecosystem alternatives* that will be presented to the public to learn which are most desired by the people in the Lake Erie basin. These workshops will be publicized through the press, Lake Erie LaMP partners and on our website. If you are interested in learning more about this subject and/or participating in the workshops, please contact: in Canada, Teresa Hollingsworth and in the United States, Kate Blumberg. (Contact information is found at the end of this chapter.)

7.5 How to Get Involved

There are a number of ways for you to get involved in the Lake Erie LaMP. If you would like to receive information as it becomes available, join the Lake Erie Network. This can be done by contacting Marlene O'Brien in Canada, or Rita Garner in the United States. (Contact information is found at the end of this chapter.)

You can read about the LaMP at our binational websites: www.cciw.ca/glimr/lakes/erie/ and www.epa.gov/glnpo/lakeerie/.

If you would like to become a member of the Forum, please contact, in Canada, Teresa Hollingsworth and in the United States, Kate Blumberg.

7.6 Contact Information

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